

THE ACTIVIST



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November 2025

Message from the Gen Sec

It's November already, where has 2025 gone! The weather is finally improving after the beating parts of NZ got in recent times. The capital is known as "windy Wellington" but this wind was at a whole new level with all passenger trains cancelled on one of the days, this has not occurred, due to wind in my 40+ years in Wellington!

The Biennial NZ CTU Conference was held in Wellington in October. We will report on this Conference in our next magazine – The Transport Worker, December edition.

Our two Ports National Management Committee Reps, Ratahi Ellis and Pierce Smith, are in Lisbon for a Conference hosted by the International Dockers Workers Council this week. The conference theme is – "People Over Profit: Anti-Automation Conference". With increasing automation being proposed or forecasted, it is essential we are aware of international responses to automation and fair transitions for any workers potentially displaced by automation.

For many, work will be ramping up for the busy season and beyond, let's make sure we safe out there. Safety must always have the priority over production.

Todd Valster
RMTU General Secretary



RMTU President Aubrey Wilkinson elected for NZ Council of Trade Unions–Te Kauae Kaimahi Vice President Māori

RMTU President Aubrey Wilkinson has been elected unopposed to the role of Vice-President Māori for the NZ Council of Trade Unions–Te Kauae Kaimahi.



Aubrey took up this role formally on the 30th October at the NZCTU conference. He was formally welcomed along with the new CTU President Sanda Grey with a mihi whakatau on the second day of the conference.

Congratulations Aubrey!
He rangatira koe i tō mahi

Pike River movie– 15 years since 29 workers were killed in a completely avoidable workplace accident.

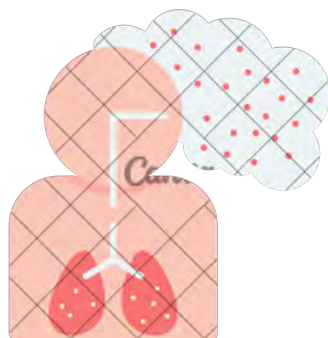


Stand with us to protect lives, strengthen safety laws, and hold the Government accountable—sign the open letter.

Click on this link to read Sonya Rockhouse and Anna Osbourne's open letter to NZ about strengthening health and safety laws and their ongoing fight for justice. To Stand with Pike [CLICK HERE](#)

WorkSafe NZ issues KiwiRail two improvement notices for failing to manage crystalline respirable silica

Following the RMTU's complaint to WorkSafe NZ regarding KiwiRail's poor management of silica dust (from ballast) during re-railing work in Remutaka tunnel at the start of this year; WorkSafe NZ investigated and issued the company with two improvement notices for breaches of both the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Health and Safety Regulations for managing hazardous substances. The Improvement notices were issued to KiwiRail on 26 September.



WorkSafe said, KiwiRail had not effectively identified the risk of respirable crystalline silica (RSC) or put in place effective control measures to protect workers health. During their investigation WorkSafe spoke with workers and managers. They said KiwiRail did not give the risk of exposure to Respirable Crystalline Silica the 'proper weighting' and there weren't effective practices in place to ensure that control measures had been implemented.

The second WorkSafe notice said KiwiRail did not provide suitable respiratory protection to workers in the tunnel with regard to size and fit and comfort to wear. Nor did workers receive adequate training on how to use the respiratory protection.

WorkSafe required KiwiRail to develop and implement a process to manage the risks of hazardous substances, specifically silica dust. They are required to develop their system with the engagement of workers.

Remutaka Tunnel dust incident Independent Review

Engineering firm BECA has been contracted by KiwiRail to do a review of the Remutaka dust exposure issue.



Andrew Livermore from Beca is leading the review and will be talking with workers (anonymously) about what happened during the block of line rerailing work. Dates for meeting with Andrew from Beca are 25th November-Christchurch, 26th November-Wellington 27th November Online via Teams.

If you would like to meet with Andrew please call or email Karen Fletcher at the RMTU's national office, kfletcher@rmtunion.org.nz or 027 6006581

Second round of personal monitoring scheduled for 4-8 November

Onboard staff including Loco Engineers working on the Wairarapa passenger service will receive a second round of personal air monitoring to check the dust levels remain controlled.

IMPORTANT!

Keep your health monitoring records.

The Union urges workers to keep copies of all health monitoring results and share them with their GP. Health issues can appear years after exposure so it is important to have results of health monitoring to help with getting ACC cover for injury. Employers are only required to retain health records for ten years. Having a permanent record ensures workers can access the information if needed in the future.

Nelson Port

Work is underway at Nelson this month to agree on ordering guidelines for the newly implemented roster.

It is a shame that after all the hard work that went into making a roster that the company is now exploiting those workers due to conditions which the workers have no influence over. It is important that when we make these significant changes to the way that work is organised that it should improve things for those workers not make it worse. We understand that times are difficult and work is hard to find, but it is no excuse for redefining clauses in our collective agreement and finding new ways to marginalise the work force.

Palmerston North Yard

A new roster has been implemented after the yard optimisation project. The jury is out on the success of this initiative.

The basis of this work has been to align the work with the train plan and looks at "a perfect world" scenario.

With a large yard and the possibility of trains arriving and departing at same time and a single TXO tasked with dealing with them, the likelihood is that trains will need to wait.

Kiwirail has stated they are prepared to adjust the roster if it does not work, so time will tell if they are prepared to honour that pledge.

Napier Port

Napier are looking at fully automated trucks starting from mid next year. This will see the loss of around six positions.

This is a new approach for a New Zealand port and will see fully automated plant operating in areas where people will be working this is a first and we watch with great interest as we have concern for the safety of our workers.

Northern Region update

It has been a busy month up here in the Northern Region, with Auckland One Rail (AOR) there has been the usual meetings about topics such as the Horn testing on startups and departure from depot (noise issues for public). These talks are ongoing.

CAF There has been the transition of most members to work under AOR, with an associated stuff up and overpayment of leave that went along with that, this is now under way to be resolved. CAF for those that have stayed to continue with the warranty work, bargaining has been initiated and first meeting held with members, next steps are to form bargaining team and then meet with company.

KiwiRail has also been a busy time with the Single Line Working (SLW) testing well under way, Mobile Radio Warning System being used to help improve operations and in the testing of SLW. We have also had the rest of country SPAD review group first meeting, this was good to get off the ground and we will take the same approach as Auckland, identify the signals of interest and then risk assess, prioritise and work with signals and RNIP to get the works done to resolve those identified issues. Out of that also comes the requirement for Non Technical Skills Training, this will be slightly different to Auckland as the contributing factors were different.

Stay Safe, Slow Down, and take one task at a time. It is important timing to remind ourselves to remain vigilant as we get into busier times, and the wind down towards Christmas.



**Check out your new
RMTU website
www.rmtunion.org.nz**



C3 Update: Interim Availability Arrangement for Cranes, Straddles and On Board Labour

The RMTU and C3 have been working together since bargaining to discuss availability provisions for RMTU members at C3 Tauranga. We started with the terminal side and are pleased to confirm that an interim arrangement will be put in place. This arrangement allows availability compensation to be paid immediately while we continue negotiations on two key issues: Guaranteed Hours of Work – ensuring compliance with the Act and clarity for members. C3 believes this complies with the Act and the RMTU disagrees because there are no guaranteed hours set in advance.

Both parties remain committed to reaching a compliant and practical hours-of-work availability compensation model. In the meantime, this interim step ensures members receive compensation without delay. Next week, we will hold targeted information sessions for the following groups:

C3 Straddles – Monday 10th November 2025 at 05:30am and 17:30pm, upstairs in the Straddle Hut for those rostered on RMTU members. Brian and Dasha to present.

C3 Cranes – Thursday 13th or Friday 14th November (will be set on Wednesday) in the C3 Boardroom. Brian and Dasha to present.

On Board Labour – Thursday 13th or Friday 14th November (will be set on Wednesday) in the C3 Portacom. Paul and Dasha to present.

If you cannot attend your targeted session, a general information session will also be available on Monday 10th November, Thursday 13th November AND Friday 14th November from 12pm–1pm in the Stevedoring Training Portacom next to Red Shed in Sulphur Point carpark. Carlie and Dasha to present.

Please keep an eye out for session times and locations, which will be communicated through emails shortly. On Friday, we will open up ratification of the variation for one week.



Union AID is about solidarity not charity. Union Aid recognise that the challenges faced by workers in the Asia-Pacific region are connected to our own struggles in New Zealand. For more information click [here](#)



Imagine an Aotearoa where good, well-paid jobs in growing industries enable a great work–life balance. Workers have enough not just to get by, but to thrive.

Visit the Policies page [here](#)

**New TAIC investigation opened
Freight train collided with heavy
road vehicle at level crossing,
Waikanae, 15 October 2025**



Freight train about to collide with truck on level crossing in Waikanae.
Credit Goodmas

The Commission is investigating a collision between a northbound freight train and a heavy road vehicle at the Elizabeth Street level crossing in Waikanae at 0620 on 15 October 2025. The reported circumstances were that a large articulated truck (Titan Mack tractor unit) hauling a low loader with an earthmoving vehicle on board) had become stranded on the level crossing while attempting to cross it. The approach of a freight train activated protection barriers, which came down on the tractor unit. The train then collided with the tractor unit. The truck driver vacated the cab before the collision and – along with the locomotive engineer -- was unhurt. The driver of a pilot vehicle had been escorting the truck sustained minor injuries.

**TAIC released their investigation findings on a safety
incident on Main South Line, Matura on 12 January 2025**

The TAIC report says on 12 January 2025, a signals technician called train control to request a 10-km/h Temporary Speed Restriction (TSR) be placed on Rayonier Crossing near Matura to carry out signals maintenance work. Just after an hour later Train 931 passed the level crossing at 77km/hour. The Loco Engineer didn't know about the speed restriction. Fortunately the Sig Tech was alerted by the train horn and there were no injuries. To read the TAIC report and recommendations [click here](#)



Please update your contact details with the RMTU by scanning the QR code.



Or you can update you contact details with the RMTU by [clicking here](#)

**Outrageous Proposal to replace
asbestos approved code of practice
with 'guidance'**



The NZCTU Te Kauae Kamahi is strongly concerned with WorkSafe's proposal to remove the asbestos Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) and replace it with 'guidance'. This would amount to weakening the standard because Approved codes of practice has a legal standing. NZCTU President Sandra Grey said "Around 220 workers are killed from asbestos related deaths every year. What's needed is stronger protections for workers.

New Zealand has a shocking track record on workplace health and safety, and we must not let that get even worse," said Grey.



RMTU Delegate Training



Delegate training was held in Dunedin at Hillside Workshops (photo below) and Christchurch (above). Both training events were well attended, good questions and involvement from the Delegates.

The **red card** content was very well received by all groups. Interaction between Rail and Ports delegates was informative for all.



Delegates from KiwiRail and Transdev do Delegate training in Wellington



[Click here to see the podcast or go to the RMTU website](#)



A second workplace death at 'Homegrown Juice factory' in Hawkes Bay

On 1 November a worker at the 'Homegrown' juice factory was killed from a fall from height incident at the factory. This is the second workplace death at the juice factory. In 2018, 23 year old Mrs Manpreet Kaur died by asphyxiation from being caught in a machine. Howegrown Juice company pleaded guilty for failing to ensure the safety of Mrs Kaur. The company was fined \$367,000 by the court in 2019.



Hikoi for health in Ōtepoti / Dunedin



About 60 people showed up to Hikoi For Health in Ōtepoti Dunedin on Monday November 3rd at 330pm.

Malcolm Mulholland of Palmerston North has been going around the country with his petition of the Buller Declaration on the State of the New Zealand Health System.

We all have or will feel the impact of the crisis the New Zealand Health System. If you think this only affects those working in the health sector, remember all of us and our whānau are users of the publicly funded health system and it is our right for it to be properly resourced! Get out and support your brothers and sisters that care and look after you and your whanau everyday.



From left to right:
Malcolm Mulholland,
Damian O'Connor,
Ingrid Leary
Ōtepoti/Taieri MP and
Rebecca Hauck

On the 28th of October a national day of solidarity was held for Rā Whakamana, to reaffirm the tino rangatiratanga of Tangata Whenua and protect the rights and wellbeing of all workers.



"Cool day in Rotorua until the rain set in"

"Rā Whakamana is a tikanga-led stand for cultural wellbeing, dignity, workers' rights, mana wāhine, rangatahi, and tino rangatiratanga – guided by iwi leadership in partnership with the union movement," said iwi spokesperson Dr Kenneth Kennedy.

Solidarity with the Fire Fighters Union



The professional fire fighters union has issued a strike notice for the 14th November. Fire fighter are taking action against Dangerous staffing levels, and fire appliances and equipment that is failing putting the lives of firefighters and the community at unnecessary risk.

The fleet is old with trucks 20-30 years old breaking down regularly.

[Learn more about this issue](#)